

Inspection of The Fountains High School

Bitham Lane, Stretton, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire DE13 0HB

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005
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What is it like to attend this school?

Staff go the extra mile to care for pupils. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. A comment made by one student echoed the views of many others: 'Teachers at this school listen to you and respect you.' Pupils are not worried about bullying. If it happens, leaders deal with it quickly and effectively.

Staff support pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour. Pupils use a common language from the 'zones of regulation' to describe how they are feeling. This helps staff to identify the best ways to support them. If pupils become upset, staff are quick to resettle them back to their learning. Consequently, lessons usually run smoothly.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils and what they can achieve. Pupils respond well to these expectations. All pupils who left the school last year and in previous years went on to education, employment or training.

Pupils value the many activities the school provides for them. This includes after-school clubs in dance and origami, residential trips and sailing. Sixth-form students are actively involved in the local community. They run a coffee bean café and a

vocational horticultural enterprise project called The Potting Shed. Both are well supported by local people.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum. They offer subjects that will prepare pupils well for adult life. This means getting the qualifications they need to be successful. It also means teaching pupils the life skills they need to be independent. For students in the sixth form, this may mean travelling to school independently or going into town at lunchtime with their friends.

Pupils follow a curriculum that closely matches their needs. Where subjects are well planned and sequenced, pupils can speak with confidence about what they have learned. For example, through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education pupils learn how to recognise different types of bullying. They also understand its damaging impact on people. However, not all subjects are as well planned. For example, in some subjects, leaders have not made clear the key knowledge and skills that pupils will learn and revisit over time. This means pupils do not make as much progress as they might.

Leaders recognise that reading is an essential life skill. To support pupils with this, they have made sure that staff are trained in how to use an effective reading programme. Leaders check how well pupils are reading. They provide extra help to those who need it, including students in the sixth form. As a result, most pupils are developing into fluent, confident readers. All pupils have reading for pleasure lessons. As a result, pupils say they enjoy reading different types of books. Learners with the most complex needs enjoy sensory books.

Developing pupils' communication skills is a key focus for school leaders. Staff use appropriate resources well. These include the use of a range of communication aids that support pupils' needs. Because of this, pupils can communicate their feelings and emotions appropriately and focus on their learning.

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, are well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training. All pupils receive helpful careers advice. Students in the sixth form have many opportunities to prepare for the world of work. This includes work placements with local businesses, for example at a day care centre for dogs, charity shops, the air ambulance service and local building companies. Students value these experiences.

Staff speak highly of the support that leaders provide for them. Staff say that leaders consider their workload and well-being. For example, they encourage teachers to share their planning and provide them with a resource bank. All staff say they enjoy working at the school. Staff value the professional development opportunities available to them through the multi-academy trust (MAT). Many staff have benefited from this support, including staff who originally joined the school in support roles and have now become qualified teachers.

Senior leaders are highly committed to the school and its pupils. However, in some cases, their roles and responsibilities are not defined clearly enough. This means, at times, that leaders' checks on aspects of the school's work lack sufficient rigour. This restricts their views about how well some things are working.

Governors take their roles seriously. They make sure that services purchased by the school provide value for money. However, at times, they do not have a clear understanding of some of the school's areas for development. This limits their ability to make informed strategic decisions and hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Everyone takes their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Staff report concerns immediately, confident in the knowledge that leaders will deal with them effectively.

Leaders have carefully considered the safety and well-being of sixth-form students based at the college. Consequently, students say they feel safe. They enjoy having more independence by being based at the college site.

Leaders complete the appropriate checks on all adults who work at or visit the school.

In PSHE lessons, staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. This includes online safety. Pupils know not to share their personal information when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all subjects are coherently planned and sequenced. This means that pupils do not do as well as they could in some subjects. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is well planned and implemented so that pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to prepare them for their next steps.
- Across the senior leadership team, some responsibilities and lines of accountability are not as clear as they might be. This means that some leaders' checks on their actions to improve the school are not suitably evaluative. This limits their understanding of what is working well and what could be improved further. Trustees should ensure that leaders' responsibilities, and lines of accountability, are more clearly defined. They should do this so that leaders' checks on their work to improve the school provide more helpful information.
- Governors do not have a clear understanding of some of the school's areas for development. This limits their ability to think and act with well-informed strategic purpose. Trustees should continue to support governors to ensure that they have

the appropriate knowledge and skills to successfully hold leaders to account for their actions.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146070
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10264829
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	69
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Emily
Headteacher	Gareth Allen
Website	www.fountains-high.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Esteem MAT. There are 11 schools in the MAT.
- The school rents classrooms at Burton College and most of the school's sixth-form provision is based there. A small number of sixth-form students with the highest levels of need continue to attend the main school site for their education.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in February 2021. The deputy headteacher and one assistant headteacher were appointed in January 2020. A second assistant headteacher was appointed in September 2022.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, other leaders, the chair and a member of the local governing body, the trust's school improvement lead, the chair of trustees, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to the chief executive officer and the trust's leader for governance.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science, performing arts and PSHE. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector visited sixth-form students based at Burton College and students at the enterprise project called The Potting Shed. An inspector looked at sixth-form students' work in other subjects.
- The inspectors talked to pupils and staff at unstructured times during the day.
- The inspectors talked to parents, carers, school transport drivers and escorts at the school gate.
- The inspectors evaluated a range of school documents and looked at information on the school's website.
- The lead inspector checked the single central record of checks on adults in school and met with the school's safeguarding leader.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ellen Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Melanie Callaghan-Lewis	Ofsted Inspector

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